Development of Oil Fields in Iraq

*167. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH:†
DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India is finalising further bilateral trade with Iraq to develop oil fields there;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the terms of the deal?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) to (c) Oil and Natural Gas Corporation -Videsh Ltd. (ONG-VL) and other Indian companies are pursuing opportunities in upstream sector of Iraq, like exploration fields and development of an oilfield, but nothing concrete has been settled so far.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Sir, the ONGC and Reliance Petroleum have been negotiating with Iraq for developing oilfields in Iraq, which happens to have the second largest oil resources in the world. The details have not been mentioned. The Minister may kindly give them.

SHRI RAM NAIK: Sir, the House must understand that, presently, there are UN sanctions on Iraq and no direct trading can be done by her. Only the programme of 'oil for food' or 'food for oil', whatever we may call it, it being done with the permission of the UNO. In this perspective, we cannot take any decision about it. That is why I have said that nothing concrete has been done so far. We are having excellent relations with Iraq. As and when the UN sanctions are lifted, we can have direct relations with them. This is really a sensitive issue. That is why, in view of the sanctions, we cannot directly deal with them, as of now.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Sir, the then Minister, Mr. Ramamurthy, has gone on record saying that India had come close to finalising a deal for development of an oilfield and, virtually it was

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri C. Ramachandraiah.

being reduced to black and white. More than one year has elapsed since, and the sanctions have already been lifted. Then, why is there the delay?

SHRI RAM NAIK: Sir, I need notice for the statement which, he says, had been made by the then Minister. To my knowledge, sanctions have not been lifted so far.

SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: The statement of the Minister is with me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Dr. Alladi P. Rajkumar. Not present. Shri C.M. Ibrahim.

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: Sir, the sanctions are only on paper. But all American companies are doing business with Iraq in other names. Now, I would like to know from the Minister whether the Government is prepared to allow Indian companies to do business there. Though they are telling us of sanctions, actually, the American companies are having their head offices in Britain and Singapore, and they are doing all the business through Jordan. Unless the Government takes some effective measures, we will be deprived of our chances of doing business there. They are exploiting this. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government will take any action in this direction.

SHRI RAM NAIK: Sir, as I said earlier, this is a sensitive issue—the issue of UN sanctions. Now, we cannot say that, under-hand, we will do like that. That is not proper on our part. But certainly, since we are having very good relations with them, as and when we get an opportunity and, as soon as the sanctions are lifted, our presence will be there. Our ONGC-Videsh Ltd. is pursuing as to how we can do this, when the sanctions are lifted.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: While replying to the question, the hon. Minister has stated that he requires a separate notice to ascertain whether his predecessor made any commitment in regard to investment for developing oil fields in Iraq. I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to why can't he himself find out this point from his own Ministry records. After all, the statement of the Minister must be backed by some action in the Ministry itself. It cannot be a *suo motu* or *impromptu* statement. Therefore, instead of

getting a separate notice, whether the hon. Minister will assure the House, that he will check up from the relevant document of his Ministry. Because the sanctions imposed are going to continue for years together. Every year, it is renewed. And except the food and medical aid, no other transactions can take place with Iraq. All these facts are known to every Minister, every Government and those who are party to the Security Council Resolution. So, it cannot be said that his predecessor did not know the relevance of this fact. I would like to request him to check up the record in his Ministry and come out with proper information to the House.

SHRI RAM NAIK: That is what I said. For giving any information about the statement, whether the statement was made in the House or outside, I will have to go through the record. That is what I said. I have no intention of denying the information.

*168 *[The Question (Shri Sitaram Kesri) was absent. For answer vide page.....infra]*

नये गैस कनेक्शनों के लिए मनमानी कीमत लिया जाना

***169 श्री रमा शंकर कौशिक:** क्या पेट्रोलियम और प्राकृतिक गैस मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार ने सार्वजनिक क्षेत्र की तेल कम्पनियों अर्थात् भारत पेट्रोलियम एवं हिन्दुस्तान पेट्रोलियम को सरकारी नियमों का खुला उल्लंघन कर मनमानी कीमत पर नये गैस कनेक्शन जारी किये जाने की अनुमति दी है;

(ख) उपरोक्त दोनों कम्पनियों को ऐसी अनुमति दिये जाने का आधार क्या है तथा प्रत्येक कनैक्शन के लिए क्या कीमत निर्धारित की गई है; और

(ग) कनैक्शन के लिये काफी अर्से से इंतजार करते आ रहे उपभोक्ताओं पर इसका क्या प्रभाव पड़ेगा तथा उन्हें कब तक गैस कनेक्शन दिया जायेगा?

पेट्रोलियम और प्राकृतिक गैस मंत्री (श्री राम नाईक): (क) जी, नहीं।

(ख) उपर्युक्त (क) के मद्देनजर प्रश्न नहीं उठता।

(ग) नए एल पी जी कनैक्शन, बुकिंग आदि की वरिष्ठता की परिपक्वता के आधार पर जारी किए जाते हैं। तथापि, आयातों और घरेलू उत्पादन के माध्यम से एल पी जी की प्रत्याशित उच्चतर उपलब्धता से भविष्य में और कनेक्शन जारी किए जाने की योजना है। हमारा प्रयास वर्ष 2001-2002 तक देशभर में प्रतीक्षा सूची को निपटा देने का है।